

# The New Oxford Dictionary of English

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CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD  
1998

Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford New York

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First published 1998

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data  
Data available

ISBN 0-19-861263-X

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Designed by Andrew Boag, Typographic problem solving, London  
Typeset in Swift and Arial  
by Selwood Systems, Midsomer Norton, Bath  
Printed in Spain  
on acid-free paper by  
Mateu Cromo Artes Graficas S.A.  
Madrid

and 'transfer (land) to a corporation in mortmain, from Old French *amortiss-*, lengthened stem of *amortir*, based on Latin *ad* 'to, at' + *mors*, mort- 'death'.

**Amos** /'eimos/ a Hebrew minor prophet (c.760 BC), a shepherd of Tekoa, near Jerusalem.  
 ■ a book of the Bible containing his prophecies.

**amosite** /'eimasait/ ► noun [mass noun] an iron-rich amphibole asbestos, mined in South Africa.

— **ORIGIN** early 20th cent.: from the initial letters of Asbestos Mines of South Africa + *-ITE*.

**amount** ► noun a quantity of something, especially the total of a thing or things in number, size, value, or extent: sport gives an enormous amount of pleasure to many people | the substance is harmless if taken in small amounts.  
 ■ a sum of money: they have spent a colossal amount rebuilding the stadium.

► verb [no obj.] (amount to) come to be (the total) when added together: losses amounted to over 10 million pounds.  
 ■ be the equivalent of: their actions amounted to a conspiracy.

— **PHRASES** any amount of a great deal or number of: the second half produced any amount of action. **no amount of** not even the greatest possible amount of: no amount of talk is going to change anything.

— **ORIGIN** Middle English (as a verb): from Old French *amunter*, from *amont* 'upward', literally 'uphill', from Latin *ad montem*. The noun use dates from the early 18th cent.

**amour** /'amuə/ ► noun a love affair or lover, especially one that is secret: he is enraged at this revelation of his past amours.

— **ORIGIN** Middle English (originally in the sense 'love, affection'): via Old French from Latin *amor* 'love'. The current sense dates from the late 16th cent.

**amour courtois** /'amuə kɔ:'tuə/ French *amur kurtuəz* ► noun another term for **COURTLY LOVE**.  
 — **ORIGIN** French.

**amour fou** /'amuə fu:/ French *amur fu* ► noun [mass noun] uncontrollable or obsessive passion.  
 — **ORIGIN** 1970s: French, 'insane love'.

**amour propre** /'amuə 'propriə/ French *amur pʁɔpʁ* ► noun [mass noun] a sense of one's own worth; self-respect: Pablo's amour propre must have been tested by his short stature.  
 — **ORIGIN** French.

**Amoy** /'a'mɔɪ/ another name for **XIAMEN**.

**AMP** Biochemistry ► abbreviation for adenosine monophosphate.

**amp** ► noun short for **AMPERE**.

**amp** ► noun informal short for **AMPLIFIER**.

**ampelopsis** /'æmpɪ'lɒpsɪs/ ► noun (pl. same) a bushy climbing plant of the vine family.

■ Genus *Ampelopsis*, family Vitaceae: two species, especially the North American *A. cordata*.  
 — **ORIGIN** modern Latin, from Greek *ampelos* 'vine' + *opsis* 'appearance'.

**amperage** /'æmpɪəridʒ/ ► noun the strength of an electric current in amperes.

**Ampère** /'æmpɛ:/ French *ɑ̃pɛʁ*, André-Marie (1775–1836), French physicist, mathematician, and philosopher, who analysed the relationship between magnetic force and electric current.

**ampere** /'æmpɛ:/ (abbrev: **A**) ► noun a unit of electric current equal to a flow of one coulomb per second.

■ The SI base unit of electric current, 1 ampere is precisely defined as that constant current which, if maintained in two straight parallel conductors of infinite length, of negligible circular cross section, and placed 1 metre apart in a vacuum, would produce between these conductors a force of  $2 \times 10^{-7}$  newton per metre.

— **ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: named after A-M **AMPÈRE**.

**ampersand** /'æmpəsənd/ ► noun the sign & (standing for *and*, as in Smith & Co., or the Latin et, as in &c.).

— **ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.: alteration of *and per se* and '6 by itself is *and*', chanted as an aid to learning the sign.

**amphetamine** /'æm'fetəmi:n, -in/ ► noun (mass noun) a synthetic, addictive, mood-altering drug, used illegally as a stimulant.

■ [count noun] a tablet of this drug.

Alternative name: 1-phenyl-2-amino-3-propane (or one of its salts, especially **amphetamine sulphate**). Chem. formula:  $C_9H_{11}N$ .

— **ORIGIN** 1930s: abbreviation of its chemical name,  $\alpha$ [(1-phenyl-2-amino-3-propyl)amino]amine.

**amphi-** /'æmfi/ ► combining form 1 both: amphibian.  
 ■ of both kinds: amphipod. ■ on both sides: amphiprostyle.

2 around: amphitheatre.  
 — **ORIGIN** from Greek.

**amphibian** ► noun Zoology a cold-blooded vertebrate animal of a class that comprises the frogs, toads, newts, salamanders, and caecilians. They are distinguished by having an aquatic gill-breathing larval stage followed (typically) by a terrestrial lung-breathing adult stage.

■ Class Amphibia: orders Urodela (newts and salamanders), Anura (frogs and toads), and Gymnophiona (caecilians).

■ a seaplane, tank, or other vehicle that can operate on land and on water.

► adjective Zoology of or relating to this class of animals: amphibian eggs.

— **ORIGIN** mid 17th cent. (in the sense 'having two modes of existence or of doubtful nature'): from modern Latin *amphibium* 'an amphibian', from Greek *amphibion* (noun use of *amphibios* 'living both in water and on land', from *amphi* 'both' + *bios* 'life').

**amphibious** /'æm'fɪbiəs/ ► adjective relating to, living in, or suited for both land and water: an amphibious vehicle.

■ (of a military operation) involving forces landed from the sea: an amphibious assault. ■ (of forces) trained for such operations.

— **DERIVATIVES** **amphibiously** adverb.

— **ORIGIN** mid 17th cent.: from modern Latin *amphibium*, from Greek *amphibion* (see **AMPHIBIAN**) + *-ous*.

**amphibole** /'æm'fɪbəʊl/ ► noun any of a class of rock-forming silicate or aluminosilicate minerals typically occurring as fibrous or columnar crystals.

— **ORIGIN** early 19th cent.: from French, from Latin *amphibolus* 'ambiguous' (because of the varied structure of these minerals), from Greek *amphibolos*, from *amphi* 'both, on both sides' + *ballein* 'to throw'.

**amphibolite** /'æm'fɪbəlaɪt/ ► noun [mass noun] Geology a granular metamorphic rock consisting mainly of hornblende and plagioclase.

— **ORIGIN** early 19th cent.: from **AMPHIBOLE** + *-ite*.

**amphibology** /'æm'fɪbɒlədʒi/ ► noun (pl. -ies) a phrase or sentence that is grammatically ambiguous, such as She sees more of her children than her husband.

— **ORIGIN** late Middle English: from Old French *amphibologie*, from late Latin *amphibologia*, from Latin *amphibolia*, from Greek *amphibolos* 'ambiguous' (see **AMPHIBOLE**).

**amphiboly** /'æm'fɪbəli/ ► noun (pl. -ies) another term for **AMPHIBOLOGY**.

**amphibrach** /'æm'fɪbræk/ ► noun Prosody a metrical foot consisting of a stressed syllable between two unstressed syllables or (in Greek and Latin) a long syllable between two short syllables.

— **ORIGIN** late 16th cent. (originally in the Latin forms *amphibrachus*, *amphibrachys*; via Latin from Greek *amphibrachos* 'short at both ends').

**amphimixis** /'æm'fɪmɪksɪs/ ► noun [mass noun] Botany sexual reproduction involving the fusion of two different gametes to form a zygote. Often contrasted with **APOMIXIS**.

— **DERIVATIVES** **amphimictic** adjective.

— **ORIGIN** late 19th cent.: from **AMPHI-** + Greek *mixis* 'mingling'.

**amphioxus** /'æm'fɪɒksəs/ ► noun a small lancelet which is caught for food in parts of Asia.

■ Genus *Branchiostoma* (formerly *Amphioxus*), family Branchiostomidae.

— **ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.: modern Latin, from **AMPHI-** + Greek *oxus* 'sharp'.

**amphipathic** /'æm'fɪpəθɪk/ ► adjective Biochemistry (of a molecule, especially a protein) having both hydrophilic and hydrophobic parts.

— **ORIGIN** 1930s: from **AMPHI-** + Greek *pathikos* (from *pathos* 'experience').

**amphililic** /'æm'fɪlɪk/ ► adjective Biochemistry another term for **AMPHIPATHIC**.

**Amphipoda** /'æm'fɪpɒdə/ Zoology an order of chiefly marine crustaceans with a laterally compressed body and a large number of leg-like appendages.

— **DERIVATIVES** **amphipod** /'æm'fɪpɒd/ noun.

— **ORIGIN** modern Latin (plural), from **AMPHI-** 'of

kinds' (because some legs are specialized for swimming and some for feeding) + Greek *pous*, pod- 'foot'.

**amphiprostyle** /'æm'fɪprɒstail/ ► adjective (of a classical building) having a portico at each end but not at the sides.

— **ORIGIN** early 18th cent.: via Latin from Greek *amphiprostulos*, from *amphi* 'both, on both sides' + *prostulos* 'having pillars in front' (see **PROSTYLE**).

**amphisbaena** /'æm'fɪs'bi:nə/ ► noun poetic/literary a mythical serpent with a head at each end.

— **ORIGIN** late Middle English: via Latin from Greek *amphisbaina*, from *amphi* 'both ways' + *bainein* 'go'.

**Amphisbaenia** /'æm'fɪs'bi:nai/ Zoology a group of reptiles which comprise the worm lizards.

■ Suborder *Amphisbaenia*, order *Squamata*.

— **DERIVATIVES** **amphisbaenian** noun & adjective.

— **ORIGIN** modern Latin, from Greek *amphisbaina*, from *amphi* 'both' + *bainein* 'go, walk'.

**amphitheatre** (US **amphitheater**) ► noun (especially in Greek and Roman architecture) a round building, typically unroofed, with a central space for the presentation of dramatic or sporting events surrounded by tiers of seats for spectators.  
 ■ a semicircular seating gallery in a theatre.

— **ORIGIN** late Middle English: via Latin from Greek *amphitheatron*, from *amphi* 'on both sides' + *theatron* (see **THEATRE**).

**Amphitrite** /'æm'fɪ'traɪti/ Greek Mythology a sea goddess, wife of Poseidon and mother of Triton.

**amphiuma** /'æm'fɪju:mə/ ► noun a fully aquatic eel-like amphibian with very small limbs, occurring in stagnant water and swamps in the south-eastern US.

■ Family *Amphiumidae* and genus *Amphiuma*: three species.

— **ORIGIN** modern Latin, probably formed irregularly from **AMPHI-** 'both' + Greek *pneuma* 'breath'.

**amphora** /'æm'fɒrə/ ► noun (pl. *amphorae* /-rɪ:/ or *amphoras*) a tall ancient Greek or Roman jar or jug with two handles and a narrow neck.

— **ORIGIN** Latin, from Greek *amphoreus*, or from French *amphore*.

**amphoteric** /'æm'fɒ'terɪk/ ► adjective Chemistry (of a compound, especially a metal oxide or hydroxide) able to react both as a base and as an acid.

— **ORIGIN** mid 19th cent.: from Greek *amphoterós*, comparative of *amphó* 'both', + *-ic*.

**ampicillin** /'æm'pɪsɪlɪn/ ► noun [mass noun] Medicine a semi-synthetic form of penicillin used chiefly to treat infections of the urinary and respiratory tracts.

— **ORIGIN** 1960s: blend of **AMINO** and a contraction of **PENICILLIN**.

**ample** ► adjective (amplér, amplest) enough or more than enough: plentiful: there is ample time for discussion | an ample supply of consumer goods.

■ large and accommodating: he leaned back in his ample chair. ■ used euphemistically to convey that someone is stout: she stood with her hands on her ample hips.

— **DERIVATIVES** **ampleness** noun, **amplly** adverb.

— **ORIGIN** late Middle English: via French from Latin *amplus* 'large, capacious, abundant'.

**amplexus** /'æm'pleksəs/ ► noun [mass noun] Zoology the mating position of frogs and toads, in which the male clasps the female about the back.

— **ORIGIN** 1930s: from Latin, 'an embrace'.

**amplifier** ► noun an electronic device for increasing the amplitude of electrical signals, used chiefly in sound reproduction.

■ a device of this kind combined with a loudspeaker, used to amplify electric guitars and other musical instruments.

**amplify** ► verb (-ies, -ied) [with obj.] (often **be amplified**) increase the volume of (sound), especially using an amplifier: the accompanying chords have been amplified in our arrangement.

■ increase the amplitude of (an electrical signal or other oscillation). ■ cause to become more marked or intense: urban policy initiatives amplified social polarization. ■ Genetics make multiple copies of (a gene or DNA sequence). ■ enlarge upon or add detail to (a story or statement): the notes amplify information contained in the statement.

— **DERIVATIVES** **amplification** noun.

— **ORIGIN** late Middle English (in the general sense 'increase, augment'): from Old French *amplifier*, from Latin *amplificare*, from *amplus* 'large, abundant'.

**amplitude** ► noun [mass noun] 1 Physics the maximum

■ a list of the books of a specific author or publisher, or on a specific subject. ■ [mass noun] the history or systematic description of books, their authorship, printing, publication, editions, etc. ■ any book containing such information.

- DERIVATIVES **bibliographer** noun, **bibliographic** /-ə'græfɪk/ adjective, **bibliographical** /-ə'græfɪk(ə)l/ adjective, **bibliographically** /-ə'græfɪk(ə)l/ adverb.

- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from French *bibliographie* or modern Latin *bibliographia*, from Greek *biblion* 'book' + *-graphia* 'writing'.

**bibliomancy** /'bɪbliəʊmænsi/ ► noun [mass noun] the practice of foretelling the future by interpreting a randomly chosen passage from a book, especially the Bible.

**bibliomania** ► noun [mass noun] passionate enthusiasm for collecting and possessing books.

- DERIVATIVES **bibliomaniac** noun & adjective.

**bibliometrics** ► plural noun [treated as sing.] statistical analysis of books, articles, or other publications.

- DERIVATIVES **bibliometric** adjective.

**bibliophile** ► noun a person who collects or has a great love of books.

- DERIVATIVES **bibliophilic** adjective, **bibliophily** /-ə'fɪli/ noun.

- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from French, from Greek *biblion* 'book' + *philos* 'loving'.

**bibliopole** /'bɪbliəʊpəʊl/ ► noun archaic a person who buys and sells books, especially rare ones.

- ORIGIN late 18th cent.: via Latin from Greek *bibliopōlēs*, from *biblion* 'book' + *pōlēs* 'seller'.

**Bibliothèque nationale** /bɪbliə'tek nəsja'na:l/ French *bibliothèque nationale* the national library of France, in Paris, which receives a copy of every book and periodical etc. published in France.

**bib tap** ► noun another term for **sis cock**.

**bibulous** /'bɪbjʊləs/ ► adjective formal excessively fond of drinking alcohol.

- DERIVATIVES **bibulously** adverb, **bibulousness** noun.

- ORIGIN late 17th cent. (in the sense 'absorbent'): from Latin *bibulus* 'freely or readily drinking' (from *bibere* 'to drink') + *-ous*.

**bicameral** /baɪ'kʌm(ə)r(ə)l/ ► adjective (of a legislative body) having two chambers.

- DERIVATIVES **bicameralism** noun.

- ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from **bi-** 'two' + Latin *camera* 'chamber' + *-al*.

**bicarb** ► noun [mass noun] informal sodium bicarbonate.

**bicarbonate** /baɪ'kʌrbəneɪt, -nət/ ► noun Chemistry a salt containing the anion  $\text{HCO}_3^-$ .

■ (also **bicarbonate of soda**) [mass noun] sodium bicarbonate.

**bice** /baɪs/ ► noun [mass noun] dated a medium blue or blue-green pigment made from basic copper carbonate.

- ORIGIN Middle English (originally in the sense 'dark or brownish grey'): from Old French *bis* 'dark grey', of unknown ultimate origin.

**bicentenary** /baɪsən'tenəri, -'ten-/ ► noun (pl. **-ies**) the two-hundredth anniversary of a significant event.

► adjective of or relating to such an anniversary: the huge bicentenary celebrations.

**bicentennial** ► noun & adjective another term for **BICENTENARY**.

**bicephalous** /baɪ'sef(ə)ləs, -'kef-/ ► adjective having two heads.

- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from **bi-** 'two' + Greek *kephalē* 'head' + *-ous*.

**biceps** /'baɪsɛps/ ► noun (pl. same) any of several muscles having two points of attachment at one end, in particular:

■ (also **biceps brachii** /breɪ'ki:vi/) a large muscle in the upper arm which turns the hand to face palm uppermost and flexes the arm and forearm: he clenched his fist and exhibited his bulging biceps. ■ (also **biceps femoris** /fɪ'mɔ:ris/ or **leg biceps**) Anatomy a muscle in the back of the thigh which helps to flex the leg.

- ORIGIN mid 17th cent.: from Latin, literally 'two-headed', from *bi-* 'two' + *-ceps* (from *caput* 'head').

**bichir** /'bɪʃɪə/ ► noun an elongated African freshwater fish with an armour of hard shiny scales and a series of separate fins along its back.

■ Genus *Polypterus*, family *Polypteridae*: several species, including *P. senegalus*.

- ORIGIN 1960s: via French from dialect Arabic *abu shir*.

**bicker** ► verb [no obj.] 1 argue about petty and trivial matters: whenever the phone rings, they bicker over who must answer it.

2 poetic/literary (of water) flow or fall with a gentle repetitive noise: patter.

■ (of a flame or light) flash, gleam, or flicker.

- DERIVATIVES **bickering** noun.

- ORIGIN Middle English: of unknown origin.

**bicky** (also **bikky**) ► noun (pl. **-ies**) informal a biscuit.

- PHRASES **big bickies** Austral. informal a large sum of money: just showing up is worth big bickies.

- ORIGIN 1930s: diminutive of **BISCUIT**.

**Bicol** ► noun & adjective variant spelling of **BIKOL**.

**bicolour** ► adjective having two colours: a male bicolour damselfish.

► noun a bicolour flower or breed.

- DERIVATIVES **bicoloured** adjective & noun.

**biconcave** ► adjective concave on both sides.

**biconvex** ► adjective convex on both sides.

**bicultural** ► adjective having or combining the cultural attitudes and customs of two nations, peoples, or ethnic groups.

- DERIVATIVES **biculturalism** noun.

**bicuspid** ► adjective having two cusps or points.

► noun a tooth with two cusps, especially a human premolar tooth.

- ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from **bi-** 'two' + Latin *cuspid*, *cuspid-* 'sharp point'.

**bicuspid valve** ► noun Anatomy another term for **MITRAL VALVE**.

**bicycle** ► noun a vehicle composed of two wheels held in a frame one behind the other, propelled by pedals and steered with handlebars attached to the front wheel.

► verb [no obj., with adverbial of direction] ride a bicycle in a particular direction: they had spent the holidays bicycling around the beautiful Devonshire countryside.

- DERIVATIVES **bicyclist** noun.

- ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: from **bi-** 'two' + Greek *kuklos* 'wheel'.

**bicycle chain** ► noun a chain that transmits the driving power from the pedals of a bicycle to its rear wheel.

**bicycle clip** ► noun either of a pair of metal clips worn by a cyclist round their ankles to prevent their trouser legs from becoming entangled with the bicycle chain.

**bicycle pump** ► noun a portable pump for inflating bicycle tyres.

**bicycle rickshaw** ► noun another term for **CYCLE RICKSHAW**.

**bicyclic** /baɪ'sɪklɪk, -'sɪk-/ ► adjective Chemistry having two rings of atoms in its molecule.

**bid** ► verb (bidding: past and past participle **bid**) [with obj.] offer (a certain price) for something, especially at an auction: a consortium of dealers bid a world record price for a snuff box | what am I bid? | [no obj.] guests will bid for pieces of fine jewellery.

■ [no obj.] (bid for) (of a contractor) offer to do (work) for a stated price: tender for: nineteen companies have indicated their intention to bid for the contract. ■ [no obj.] (bid for) make an effort or attempt to achieve: the two forwards are bidding for places in the England side. ■ Bridge make a statement during the auction undertaking to make (a certain number of tricks with a stated suit as trumps) if the bid is successful and one becomes the declarer: North bids four hearts | [no obj.] with this hand, South should not bid.

► noun an offer of a price, especially at an auction: at the fur tables, several buyers make bids for the pelts.

■ an offer to buy the shares of a company in order to gain control of it: a takeover bid. ■ an offer to do work or supply goods at a stated price: a tender. ■ an attempt or effort to achieve something: Edward helped him make a bid for the Scottish throne | [with infinitive] an investigation would be carried out in a bid to establish what had happened. ■ Bridge an undertaking by a player in the auction to make a stated number of tricks with a stated suit as trumps.

- DERIVATIVES **bidding** noun.

- ORIGIN Old English *beodan* 'to offer, command', of Germanic origin: related to Dutch *bieden* and German *bieten*.

**bid** ► verb (bidding: past **bid** or **bade**; past participle **bid**) [with obj.] 1 utter (a greeting or farewell) to: a chance to bid farewell to their president and welcome the new man.

2 archaic or poetic/literary command or order (someone) to do something: I did as he bade me.

■ invite (someone) to do something: he bade his companions enter.

- PHRASES **bid fair** to archaic or poetic/literary seem likely to: the girl bade fair to be pretty.

- ORIGIN Old English *biddan* 'ask', of Germanic origin: related to German *bitten*.

**bidarka** /baɪ'dɑ:kə/ ► noun a canoe covered with animal skins, used by the Inuit of Alaska and adjacent regions.

- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from Russian *baidarka*, diminutive of *baidara* 'an umiak'.

**biddable** ► adjective 1 meekly ready to accept and follow instructions.

2 Bridge strong enough to justify a bid.

- DERIVATIVES **biddability** /-bɪdɪbɪlɪ/ noun.

**bidden** archaic or poetic/literary past participle of **BID**.

**bidding** ► noun [mass noun] 1 the offering of particular prices for something, especially at an auction.

■ the offers made in such a situation: from a cautious opener of E30, the bidding soared to a top of £48. ■ (in bridge and whist) the action of stating before play how many tricks one intends to make.

2 the ordering or requesting of someone to do something: women came running at his bidding | [in sing.] I never needed a second bidding.

- PHRASES **do someone's bidding** do what someone orders or requests, especially in a way considered overly slavish.

**bidding paddle** ► noun a paddle-shaped baton, typically marked with an identifying number, used to signal bids at auctions.

**bidding prayer** ► noun (in church use) a prayer in the form of an invitation by a minister or leader to the congregation to pray about something.

**biddy** ► noun (pl. **-ies**) informal a woman, especially an elderly one, regarded as annoying or interfering: the old biddies were muttering in his direction.

- ORIGIN early 17th cent. (originally denoting a chicken): of unknown origin; probably influenced by the use of *biddy* denoting an Irish maidservant, from *Biddy*, pet form of the given name *Brigid*.

**bide** ► verb [no obj., with adverbial of place] archaic or dialect remain or stay somewhere: how long must I bide here to wait for the answer?

- PHRASES **bide one's time** wait quietly for a good opportunity to do something: she patiently bided her time before making an escape bid.

- ORIGIN Old English *bidan*, of Germanic origin.

**bidet** ► noun a low oval basin used for washing one's genital and anal area.

- ORIGIN mid 17th cent. (in the sense 'horse'): from French, literally 'pony', from *bider* 'to trot', of unknown origin.

**bidi** /bɪ'di:/ (also **beedi** or **biri**) ► noun (pl. **bidis**) (in the Indian subcontinent) a type of cheap cigarette made of unprocessed tobacco wrapped in leaves.

- ORIGIN from Hindi *bīdī* 'betel plug, cigar', from Sanskrit *bīṭikā*.

**bidirectional** ► adjective functioning in two directions.

**bidonville** /bɪ'd(ə)nvl/ ► noun a shanty town built of oil drums or other metal containers, especially on the outskirts of a North African city.

- ORIGIN 1950s: from French, from *bidon* 'container for liquids' + *vill* 'town'.

**bid price** ► noun the price at which a market-maker or dealer is prepared to buy securities or other assets. Compare with **OFFER PRICE**.

**bidri** /'bɪdri/ ► noun [mass noun] an alloy of copper, lead, tin, and zinc, used as a ground for inlaying with gold and silver.

- ORIGIN late 18th cent.: from Urdu *bīdrī*, from *Bidar*, the name of a town in India.

**Biedermeier** /'bɪdə'meɪə/ ► adjective denoting or relating to a style of furniture and interior decoration current in Germany in the period 1815-48, characterized by restraint, conventionality, and utilitarianism.

- ORIGIN from the name of Gottlieb Biedermeyer, a fictitious German provincial schoolmaster and poet created by L. Eichrodt (1854).

**Bielefeld** /'bi:ləfelt/ an industrial city in North Rhine-Westphalia in western Germany: pop. 322,130 (1991).

**biennale** /bi:'neɪlə, -li/ ► noun a large art

b but | d dog | f few | g get | h he | j yes | k cat | l leg | m man | n no | p pen | r red | s sit | t top | v voice | w we | z zoo | f she | g decision | θ thin | ð this | ŋ ring | x loch | tʃ chip | dʒ jar

- a Presbyterian minister presiding over an ecclesiastical body.
- 2 a person who reviews examination papers to ensure consistency, or otherwise oversees an examination.
- 3 Physics a substance used in a nuclear reactor to retard neutrons.

- DERIVATIVES **moderatorship** noun.

**modern** ▶ adjective of or relating to the present or recent times as opposed to the remote past: the pace of modern life | modern Chinese history.

■ characterized by or using the most up-to-date techniques, ideas, or equipment: they do not have modern weapons. ■ [ju:nb.] denoting the form of a language that is currently used, as opposed to any earlier form: modern German. ■ [ju:nb.] denoting a current or recent style or trend in art, architecture, or other cultural activity marked by a significant departure from traditional styles and values: Matisse's contribution to modern art.

▶ noun (usu. **moderns**) a person who advocates or practises a departure from traditional styles or values.

- DERIVATIVES **modernity** noun, **modernly** adverb, **modernness** noun.

- ORIGIN late Middle English: from late Latin *modernus*, from Latin *modus* 'just now'.

**modern dance** ▶ noun [mass noun] a free expressive style of dancing started in the early 20th century as a reaction to classical ballet. In recent years it has included elements not usually associated with dance, such as speech and film.

**moderne** /mə'da:n/ ▶ adjective of or relating to a popularization of the art deco style marked by bright colours and geometric shapes.

■ often derogatory denoting an ultra-modern style.

- ORIGIN mid 20th cent.: French, 'modern'.

**modern English** ▶ noun [mass noun] the English language as it has been since about 1500.

**Modern Greats** ▶ plural noun (at Oxford University) the school of philosophy, politics, and economics.

**modern history** ▶ noun [mass noun] history up to the present day, from some arbitrary point taken to represent the end of the Middle Ages. In some contexts it may be contrasted with 'ancient' rather than 'medieval' history, and start (e.g.) from the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

**modernism** ▶ noun [mass noun] modern character or quality of thought, expression, or technique: when he waxes philosophical, he comes over as a strange mix of nostalgia and modernism.

■ a style or movement in the arts that aims to break with classical and traditional forms. ■ a movement towards modifying traditional beliefs in accordance with modern ideas, especially in the Roman Catholic Church in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

**modernist** ▶ noun a believer in or supporter of modernism, especially in the arts.

▶ adjective of or associated with modernism, especially in the arts.

- DERIVATIVES **modernistic** adjective.

**modernize** (also -ise) ▶ verb [with obj.] adapt (something) to modern needs or habits, typically by installing modern equipment or adopting modern ideas or methods: he wanted to modernize the health service.

- DERIVATIVES **modernization** noun, **modernizer** noun.

**modern jazz** ▶ noun [mass noun] jazz as developed in the 1940s and 1950s, especially bebop and the music that followed it.

**modern languages** ▶ plural noun European languages (especially French and German) as a subject of study, as contrasted with classical Latin and Greek.

**modern Latin** ▶ noun [mass noun] Latin as developed since 1500, used especially in scientific terminology.

**modern pentathlon** ▶ noun see **PENTATHLON**.

**modest** ▶ adjective 1 unassuming or moderate in the estimation of one's abilities or achievements: he was a very modest man, refusing to take any credit for the enterprise.

2 (of an amount, rate, or level of something) relatively moderate, limited, or small: drink modest amounts of alcohol | employment growth was relatively modest.

■ of a place in which one lives, eats, or stays) not

excessively large, elaborate, or expensive: a modest flat in Fulham.

3 (of a woman) dressing or behaving so as to avoid impropriety or indecency, especially to avoid attracting sexual attention.

■ (of clothing) not revealing or emphasizing the figure: modest dress means that hemlines must be below the knee.

- DERIVATIVES **modestly** adverb.

- ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from French *modeste*, from Latin *modestus* 'keeping due measure', related to *modus* 'measure'.

**modesty** ▶ noun [mass noun] the quality or state of being unassuming or moderate in the estimation of one's abilities: with typical modesty he insisted on sharing the credit with others.

■ the quality of being relatively moderate, limited, or small in amount, rate, or level: the modesty of his political aspirations. ■ behaviour, manner, or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency: modesty forbade her to undress in front of so many people.

**modicum** /'mɒdɪkəm/ ▶ noun [in sing.] a small quantity of a particular thing, especially something considered desirable or valuable: his statement had more than a modicum of truth.

- ORIGIN late 15th cent.: from Latin, neuter of *modicus* 'moderate', from *modus* 'measure'.

**modification** ▶ noun [mass noun] the action of modifying something: the parts supplied should fit with little or no modification.

■ [count noun] a change made: a number of modifications are being carried out to the engines.

- ORIGIN late 15th cent. (in Scots law, denoting the assessment of a payment): from French, or from Latin *modification(n)*, from *modificare* (see **MODIFY**).

**modifier** ▶ noun a person or thing that makes partial or minor changes to something.

■ Grammar a word, especially an adjective or noun used attributively, that restricts or adds to the sense of a head noun (e.g. good and family in a good family house).

■ Genetics a gene which modifies the phenotypic expression of a gene at another locus.

**modify** ▶ verb (-ies, -ied) [with obj.] make partial or minor changes to (something), typically so as to improve it or to make it less extreme: she may be prepared to modify her views | [as adj. **modified**] a modified version of the aircraft.

■ Biology transform (a structure) from its original anatomical form during development or evolution.

■ Grammar (especially of an adjective) restrict or add to the sense of (a noun): the target noun is modified by a 'direction' word. ■ Phonetics pronounce (a speech sound) in a way that is different from the norm for that sound.

- DERIVATIVES **modifiable** adjective, **modificatory** adjective.

- ORIGIN late Middle English: from Old French *modifier*, from Latin *modificare*, from *modus* (see **MODE**).

**Modigliani** /mɒdɪ'ljɑ:nɪ/, Amedeo (1884-1920), Italian painter and sculptor, resident in France from 1906. His portraits and nudes are noted for their elongated forms, linear qualities, and earthy colours.

**modillion** /mɒ'dɪljən/ ▶ noun Architecture a projecting bracket under the corona of a cornice in the Corinthian and other orders.

- ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from French *modillon*, from Italian *modiglione*, based on Latin *mutulus* 'mutule'.

**modiolus** /mɒ'dɪəljəs/ ▶ noun (pl. **modioli**) Anatomy the conical central axis of the cochlea of the ear.

- ORIGIN early 19th cent.: from Latin, literally 'nave of a wheel'.

**modish** /'mɒdɪʃ/ ▶ adjective often derogatory conforming to or following what is currently popular and fashionable: it seems sad that such a scholar should feel compelled to use this modish jargon.

- DERIVATIVES **modishly** adverb, **modishness** noun.

**modiste** /mɒ'dɪst/ ▶ noun dated a fashionable milliner or dressmaker.

- ORIGIN mid 19th cent.: French, from *mode* 'fashion'.

**Moderations** ▶ plural noun informal the Moderations examination at Oxford University.

**modular** ▶ adjective employing or involving a module or modules as the basis of design or construction: modular housing units.

■ of or relating to an educational course designed as a series of independent units of study that can be

combined in a number of ways. ■ Mathematics of or relating to a modulus.

- DERIVATIVES **modularity** noun.

- ORIGIN late 18th cent.: from modern Latin *modularis*, from Latin *modulus* (see **MODULUS**).

**modulate** /'mɒdjuleɪt/ ▶ verb [with obj.] exert a modifying or controlling influence on: the state attempts to modulate private business's cash flow.

■ vary the strength, tone, or pitch of (one's voice): we all modulate our voice by hearing it. ■ alter the amplitude or frequency of (an electromagnetic wave or other oscillation) in accordance with the variations of a second signal, typically one of a lower frequency: radio waves are modulated to carry the analogue information of the voice. ■ [no obj.] Music change from one key to another: the first half of the melody, modulating from E minor to G. ■ [no obj.] (**modulate into**) change from one form or condition into (another): the fraught silence would modulate into conciliatory monosyllables.

- DERIVATIVES **modulation** noun, **modulator** noun.

- ORIGIN mid 16th cent. (in the sense 'intone (a song)'): from Latin *modulat-* 'measured, made melody', from the verb *modulari*, from *modulus* 'measure' (see **MODULUS**).

**module** ▶ noun each of a set of standardized parts or independent units that can be used to construct a more complex structure, such as an item of furniture or a building.

■ each of a set of independent units of study or training that can be combined in a number of ways to form a course at a college or university. ■ [usu. with modifier] an independent self-contained unit of a spacecraft. ■ Computing any of a number of distinct but interrelated units from which a program may be built up or into which a complex activity may be analysed.

- ORIGIN late 16th cent. (in the senses 'allotted scale' and 'plan, model'): from French, or from Latin *modulus* (see **MODULUS**). Current senses date from the 1950s.

**modulo** /'mɒdjʊlə/ ▶ preposition Mathematics (in number theory) with respect to or using a modulus of a specified number. Two numbers are congruent modulo a given number if they give the same remainder when divided by that number.

■ [as modifier] using moduli: modulo operations.

- ORIGIN late 19th cent.: from Latin, ablative of *modulus* (see **MODULUS**).

**modulus** /'mɒdjʊləs/ Mathematics ▶ noun (pl. **moduli** [-laɪ, -li]) 1 another term for **ABSOLUTE VALUE**.

■ the positive square root of the sum of the squares of the real and imaginary parts of a complex number.

2 a constant factor or ratio.

■ a constant indicating the relation between a physical effect and the force producing it.

3 a number used as a divisor for considering numbers in sets, numbers being considered congruent when giving the same remainder when divided by a particular modulus.

- ORIGIN mid 16th cent. (denoting an architectural unit of length): from Latin, literally 'measure', diminutive of *modus*.

**modus operandi** /'mɒdəs ɒpə'rændi:, -dɪ/ ▶ noun (pl. **modi operandi** /'mɒdɪ/ [usu. in sing.]) a particular way or method of doing something, especially one that is characteristic or well-established: every killer has his own special *modus operandi*.

■ the way something operates or works.

- ORIGIN Latin, literally 'way of operating'.

**modus ponens** /'mɒdəs 'pəʊnɛnz/ ▶ noun the rule of logic which states that if a conditional statement ('if p then q') is accepted, and the antecedent (p) holds, then the consequent (q) may be inferred.

■ an argument using this rule.

- ORIGIN Latin, literally 'mood that affirms'.

**modus tollens** /'mɒdəs 'tɒlənz/ ▶ noun the rule of logic which states that if a conditional statement ('if p then q') is accepted, and the consequent does not hold (**not-q**) then the negation of the antecedent (**not-p**) can be inferred.

■ an argument using this rule.

- ORIGIN Latin, literally 'mood that denies'.

**modus vivendi** /'mɒdəs vɪ'vendi:, -dɪ/ ▶ noun (pl. **modi vivendi** /'mɒdɪ/ [usu. in sing.]) an arrangement or agreement allowing conflicting parties to coexist peacefully, either indefinitely or until a final settlement is reached.

■ a way of living.

- ORIGIN Latin, literally 'way of living'.

**Moesia** /'mi:siə, 'mi:fə/ an ancient country of